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ABSTRACT

The most radical and fundamental school reform of all was the creation of the free and universal system of public education in the United States, but there has been a plethora of reform efforts since. This book reviews the history of over 30 reforms since 1960, remarking on how ideas have influenced educational practice and commenting on how poor most of these reforms have, in fact, been. The intellectual and democratic perspective espoused by the tradition of John Dewey and the scientific and technological perspective provide the conceptual framework for the analysis of 30 years of school reform. New curricula, open classrooms, team teaching, mastery learning, and compensatory education are among the 34 reform efforts reviewed. If school practice and reform are to become more thoughtful, it is essential to ask not only how effective the reform is, but to ask first how educationally worthwhile it is. Three appendixes list 21 Deweyian criteria for reforms and provide general comments on some frequently advocated reform models. Photographs with associated commentary illustrate some aspects of the history of educational reform. (Contains 5 figures and 65 references.) (SLD)

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